

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 253 209

IR 011 485

AUTHOR Cain, John; And Others
TITLE The Implications of Cable and Satellites for Social Action and Educational Broadcasting. Media Project. A Seminar Report.
INSTITUTION Volunteer Centre, Berkhamsted (England).
SPONS AGENCY British Broadcasting Corp., London (England).
PUB DATE 20 Jan 83
NOTE 35p.; Proceedings of a Seminar held at the Volunteer Centre (Berkhamsted, England, January 20, 1983).
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021) -- Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cable Television; *Communications Satellites; Educational Change; *Educational Television; Foreign Countries; Futures (of Society); Interaction; *Policy Formation; *Programing (Broadcast); *Social Action; Technological Advancement
IDENTIFIERS *Great Britain

ABSTRACT

An invitation-only seminar was held on January 20, 1983 to share knowledge, concerns, and ideas on the implications of cable and satellite for social action and educational broadcasting. An introduction by John Cain noted that, although the primary seminar focus was cable and satellite, other important developments could be equally important, including videocassettes, videotex, small computers, and tele-software. John Howkins, in a presentation entitled "The Potential of Cable and Satellite," offered predictions on the future of British cable television. In "Social Action and Education--the Implications of Cable and Satellite," Robin McCron argued that cable should be of more concern for social action and education broadcasting. Related discussion addressed the spread of cable coverage, cable as a local service, educational services through cable, the role of unions, the question of copyright, and the impact of interactivity on existing broadcasting services. Robin Moss presented "Views on the Day," concluding that education is changing under the same types of pressures that are changing broadcasting and communications. Appendices include a summary of related events and government decisions for 1982, a list of some important Hunt Committee recommendations, a nine-item reading list, and three papers: "Satellite and Cable--The Background," "Cable Television in the United Kingdom," and a follow-up paper for seminar participants. (LMM)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *



The Volunteer Centre

29 Lower King's Road Berkhamsted Herts HP4 2AB Tel: Berkhamsted 73311

MEDIA PROJECT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

* This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF CABLE AND SATELLITES FOR SOCIAL ACTION AND EDUCATIONAL BROADCASTING

A SEMINAR — 20 JANUARY 1983

REPORT

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M.D. Hodgkinson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED253209

IR011485

BACKGROUND

In the late spring of 1982 a small group of people came together whose common interest was the implications of cable and satellite for social action and educational broadcasting. The interest had occurred as a result of three events in March of that year: the Home Secretary's announcement that the BBC would be allocated the first two channels of the Direct Broadcasting by Satellite (DBS) system to start in 1986; the publication of the Government's Information Technology Advisory Panel (ITAP) Report which called for the cabling of Britain and thirdly, the establishment of the Hunt Committee to examine the implications of these cable proposals especially as regards their effects on broadcasting.

It was felt there was a need for a wider group of people to be brought together who shared the interests of social action and educational broadcasting, and consequently a seminar was planned to take place on January 20, 1983. Participation was by invitation only, and it was not intended that there would necessarily be any outcome other than a greater share of knowledge, concern and ideas.

The Government White Paper, *The Development of Cable Systems and Services* (HMSO Cmnd 8866. April 1983) does not appear to significantly change the situation as it was discussed at the Seminar.

Background papers were circulated before the event and some of these are provided as appendices to this report as is a list of the participants.

The seminar was organised by Eileen Ware of the Media Project at The Volunteer Centre, and help towards the costs was provided by the BBC and the IBA whilst the Institute of Contemporary Arts provided the venue.

PLANNING GROUP

John Cain, Controller, Public Affairs, BBC (Chairman)
Neil Barnes, Senior Education Officer, Continuing Education, BBC
Tony Bates, Reader in Media Research Methods, Open University
John Howkins, Editor, "InterMedia", International Institute of Communications
Charlie Mayo, Education Officer, IBA
Robin Moss, Chairman, Educational Television Association
Vincent Thompson, Assistant Director, Council for Educational Technology
Eileen Ware, Information Officer, Media Project, The Volunteer Centre
(conference organiser)

PROGRAMME

10.00am

SETTING THE SCENE

JOHN CAIN

*Controller - Public Affairs, BBC
Chairman of the Seminar*

During this session there will be an opportunity to put questions to engineers about the technicalities of cable and satellites.

TONY HARWOOD

Principal Engineering Information Officer, IBA

PAT LEGGATT

Head of Engineering Information Department, BBC

11.15am

THE POTENTIAL OF CABLE AND SATELLITE

JOHN HOWKINS

Editor - InterMedia, International Institute of Communications

12.00noon

SOCIAL ACTION AND EDUCATION - THE IMPLICATIONS OF CABLE AND SATELLITE

ROBIN MCCRON

*Research Associate, Centre for Mass Communication Research,
University of Leicester*

2.00pm

DISCUSSION ON THE MORNING'S PAPERS AND ON THE PAPERS CIRCULATED PRIOR TO THE SEMINAR

3.30pm

VIEWS ON THE DAY

ROBIN MOSS

Chairman, Educational Television Association

4.15pm

WHAT NEXT?

SETTING THE SCENE

JOHN CAIN, Controller - Public Affairs, BBC

John Cain described the background to the seminar. A number of people had come together because they felt there were enormous implications for their work in the rather momentous changes taking place in new technology. Their broad areas of interest are education and social action broadcasting. There was no intention to set up a pressure group or any other new organisation; rather the event was intended as an interchange of ideas.

Although the event was primarily concerned with cable and satellite there are other developments that could be equally important: the video cassette, videotext, teletext, small computers, tele-software (ie, the transmission of computer programmes over the air). The planning group had focussed on cable and satellite because they were the subject of legislation which it might be possible to influence.

Outlining the arrangements for the day, John Cain reminded participants that a number of papers had been distributed and these included technical documents from both the BBC and the IBA. The first session would enable participants to clarify technical points with representatives of the BBC and IBA Engineering Departments.

Participants were able to put questions about the technicalities of cable and satellites as described in technical background papers to *TONY HARWOOD, Principal Engineering Information Officer, IBA* and *PAT LEGGATT, Head of Engineering Information Department, BBC*. A summary is not included here since the session was intended to assist the main debate. However two of the technical papers provided to participants can be found as Appendices IV and V.

THE POTENTIAL OF CABLE AND SATELLITE

JOHN HOWKINS, Editor - "InterMedia", International Institute of Communications

John Howkins started by reminding participants that in the early 1970s a diverse group of people had come together to form a Channel 4 lobby. The group had included broadcasters, film makers, trade unionists, educationists, politicians, people from the churches and others. Most fell by the wayside, but the main lobby of independent producers had a powerful influence on legislation and the setting up of the Channel 4 company. This example shows it is possible for a group outside the existing broadcasting organisations to influence how the (new) technologies are used.

Many people tend to see cable on the American pattern - as an entertainment service provided locally. But cable will not be a local medium - it will be a national medium. The capital will come from London because financially we are a centralised society; the advertisements will be financed, produced and distributed from London; the regulation will be national; the successful programme channels will be nationally provided. Any local element in a cable service - even in a large city - will be peripheral to the main thrust of the service.

Almost every cable system in this country will have British Telecom as a partner sharing equity, he predicted. The idea of a split between on the one hand a public service telecommunications authority (British Telecom) providing the telephone service and on the other hand privately financed entrepreneurs providing cable entertainment is unrealistic. It would be very expensive for a cable company to block out British Telecom.

This mix will change the relationship of entertainment services - which is what most people mean by cable television - and interactive services. At the moment there is the supposition that the profits from a good entertainment service enable the system to be improved to provide interactive services. This idea was first launched in the ITAP Report and taken up uncritically by Hunt, but it is a logical progression that has never happened anywhere in the world. We must start from the beginning to set up switched interactive services.

The most astonishing development of the past twelve months has been the introduction of video and computers into people's homes. No one predicted this and we tend to forget about it when talking about new technologies - largely because no government committee has been set up to look at it. There has been a drop in viewing of television and a drop in advertising income. At least part of the reason is probably that the existing measuring systems do not take time shift recording into account. People are spending between 20 and 40 minutes a week doing other things - it begins to grow into hours on the more recent figures. It indicates a different attitude towards television than the traditional one and it is being stimulated by all these gadgets that people have in their homes, especially home computers.

There is a need to consider what we mean by 'communication' and 'information'; there is no generally accepted theory of communication. The whole idea that it is some sort of linear progression from a speaker to a listener with an arrow going one way, with perhaps a little bit of feedback, is no longer acceptable. We need some idea of what we are talking about when we design communication policies, set up systems and create services. Research is needed to help us understand what communications are.

John Howkins referred to the fragmented sets of government responsibilities: broadcasting under the remit of the Home Office; films under the Department of Trade; Information Technology under the Department of Industry; the Department of Education; the Office of Arts and Libraries. This latter department is currently considering a Select Committee proposal for a Ministry which will be responsible for all of these things. It would include broadcasting, tourism, heritage, museums, even sport. But it would not include the telecommunications infrastructure. John Howkins doubted this was the right answer. What is needed is something more coherent and more integrated rather than the present system whereby it is possible for the Home Office to set up the Hunt Committee and discourage it from looking at either British Telecom or the technological aspects of cable.

A question and answer session followed but in order to make the report cohesive all such sessions have been combined and appear later.

SOCIAL ACTION AND EDUCATION - THE IMPLICATIONS OF CABLE AND SATELLITE

ROBIN McCRON, Research Associate, Centre for Mass Communication Research, University of Leicester

So far as education and social action broadcasting is concerned, cable should concern us more than satellite, Robin McCron argued. In particular we need to consider the British context in view of the kind of outline that the Hunt Committee has provided for us.

The first feature of education and social action broadcasting is that there is an intent to produce some form of individual or social change of a traditionally educational kind. There are many versions of this type of broadcasting but they all have the intent of producing some kind of change rather than just pacifying the audience.

The second feature that needs to be taken into account is the growing recognition by most of those involved in educational and social action broadcasting that there is a requirement in many instances for some kind of back-up system to enable the audience to follow-up their interest in a programme.

The third feature is the recognition of the value of partnership between broadcasters and non-broadcasters in fully harnessing and maximising the potential of broadcasting and follow-up.

These three things are set in the context that the use of broadcasting technologies can on occasions reach parts of the audience that other forms of education cannot reach: the isolated, the rural, the groups of people who might not otherwise be inclined to offer themselves for education or to have educational facilities available for them.

Given these features - and they are not exhaustive - any new medium or message delivery system that can enhance or optimise the attainment of these educational and social action objectives are to be applauded, supported and financed.

Cable particularly, but to some extent also satellite, has several attractive positive features in this task. In theory the availability of more channels should allow for more voices to be heard and gives the potential of more activity on the part of the audience. Hunt talks about 'locality-based' systems encouraged to use local facilities for production which might encourage localised initiatives. But nowhere does he tell us how he is going to ensure this is done. For him 'locality-based' can be anything up to half a million people - nowhere does he talk about community-based systems. The third most exciting aspect of what cable can allow is an interactive capability, the possibility of developing follow-up mechanisms, feed-back systems, push button voting.

But will the use of cable serve better the educational needs and demands of all the people in the community? Will they improve on the excellent educational broadcasting that we have at the moment?

Cable could do it, Robin McCron suggested, but he thought it was unlikely to happen. There is nothing in Hunt that points to the kind of control or regulatory or facilitating system that would have to be involved to ensure that the full potential of cable system for educational and social action

purposes are actually met. There is a danger that there would be a reduction of education and community programming to the level of a market value commodity. Hunt did not confront the financing considerations of local community and education facilities on cable, yet the cable television and radio experiments in the 1970s showed that the financing of local community radio and television facilities is crucial. Plenty of people are willing to watch local broadcasting from time-to-time, but they are not prepared to pay for it. We would need appropriate studio and other hardware facilities, the resourcing of back-up facilities, training and so on. If we have enough faith in the potential of cable for the development of community education systems then we need to make sure that sufficient resources are allocated for these tasks.

A further worry is the threat to our four national television over-the-air channels as too many people attempt to share the advertising cake and the audiences. That process may already have begun with the onset of video machines.

In the next ten years or so, perhaps the implications of cable for education and social action broadcasting will be rather limited. To devote too much attention to a scare of cable could be dangerous in that it might divert us away from other potentially valuable media. Video for instance has many useful educational applications which give a good deal more flexibility than fixed cable programme schedules. And we should not forget local radio.

The ultimate in the use of these technologies in relation to education is the push button quick-response society - the idea that we can take part in all our democratic decision-making by pushing buttons, that we can learn all our Latin and Greek and computing by being sat in front of a television set. The technological possibilities are endless. But we might want to question what kind of education or democratic participation we want to see in this society and whether that is compatible with the push button society that we are very rapidly heading ourselves towards.

DISCUSSION

During the first three sessions and for most of the afternoon there was a wide ranging discussion. Since many points that were raised continued throughout all the sessions, the reports of all discussions relating to speakers and papers have been brought together in this section.

COVERAGE OF CABLE

The fundamental question posed by one speaker and echoed by many was: "who's going to cable Toxteth?". Those who may need the local services the most in terms of social interaction are likely to face another level of exclusion because the commercial imperative will not put the cable into such areas. And even if the cable were to be laid in such areas, who would be able to afford the services? What would be the cost to the individual subscriber? The need to pay will increase social stratification in society. Rather than a kind of Utopia in which everyone will be able to participate, cable will fragment society even further.

Technologically, we were told, there is no reason why the whole country should not be cabled, but this will only occur if there is political pressure and

commercial incentive for it to do so. The telephone goes into about 83/84% of homes, but only reaches into rural areas because it is seen to be a social necessity.

One good recommendation in the Hunt Report was that the licence should be offered to a cable operator who would cable the poorer areas as well as the rich.

A LOCAL SERVICE?

Concern was expressed by a number of speakers at John Howkins' prediction that cable developments would be nationally financed and controlled with programming being provided largely from central sources. Many speakers argued for a legal requirement for a proportion of the programme revenue to be made available for local community originated material.

Some participants were already involved in discussions with potential franchise holders who were promising local opportunities. But we were warned that such promises had been made before - in this country by independent radio and television contractors and in the USA by cable contractors - but the promises had not always been kept. More than a limited local service was not financially viable.

And did viewers want local programmes? Evidence from independent local radio suggested they did - at certain times, but that local programming needed to be concentrated on one channel. We were told of a small cable station in rural Ontario where for two hours a week the whole population gathers to see what is locally produced on their cable station; for the rest of the week they had typical Canadian viewing habits.

The big problem would be the funding of such programmes. From where would local groups get the finance - from a tax on the franchise holder? Local access without resources is bad and results in minute audiences - 'slimmer-casting' is what it is called in the USA, we were told: 'broadcasting to your mother'.

Would it be possible for the revenue for a cable service to be raised from the community, thereby ensuring that the community governed editorial policy?

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

One participant described the background to a project he had been undertaking with Rediffusion who are considering putting together an educational cable channel. They would find another organisation to run it under their aegis. The service would be made available not only to their own outlets but also to any other cable operator that wants to take it. The remit suggests it would be a fairly formal instructional service rather than simple enrichment programming. They think it would only be viable as a free package or a virtually free package to cable operators. He said he was currently looking at the availability of programmes for this channel and also for possible sources of finance - perhaps private and public sponsorship.

The Chairman said that recent press reports suggested that Austria, Denmark, West Germany and the UK are collaborating in a plan to distribute adult education programmes via the European television satellite due to be launched in about two years time. The scheme is evolving under the auspices of the

Council of Europe in Strasbourg. The UK output will come from the Open University. A total of 13 teaching units is expected to be ready by 1985 and satellite transmission may be co-ordinated with video cassette recordings.

THE UNIONS AND COPYRIGHT

What would be the role of the Unions in all this? Their attitude would not only determine whether existing material - made for use in a university for example - could be made available, but also the eventual cost of programmes. It was suggested that the ACTT might take the line that they were fighting for standards and for good material to be offered to the community.

The question of copyright was also raised as a key issue. It was suggested, for instance, that existing Open University programmes could not be made available on cable because of the way the rights have been drawn up. It was suggested that the same might be true of material generated by other educational bodies and that the idea that there is already a massive stock of material waiting to be transmitted is not as simple as suggested.

INTERACTIVE SERVICES

How soon would interactive services come? If the American experience is anything to go by, it was suggested, not very quickly.

The transmitting of computer programmes either through wires or over the air - Telesoftware - is already available but limited to a few. The BBC is transmitting (computer) programmes from March 1983 to the small number who have the facility. They will be able to receive the (computer) programmes over the air, store them and play them back when required.

One speaker queried what were the advantages of interactive cable systems above the use of the telephone service. The answer was by an example - that a two-way video cable link between a university and a hospital would enable students to watch techniques in seminar of an operation using the return path from the hospital to the university - it would not be available to the ordinary viewer. There is also the videophone (being able to see as well as hear someone at the other end of a telephone line), but that had not proved popular, being very expensive. But the original questioner pointed out that most literature about interactive services offers things like shopping, banking services and so on. These could be carried out using Prestel. The only argument in favour of using cable seemed to be "because it's there".

The Chairman agreed that at the moment broadcast or cable provides little interactivity. You can answer simple questions, vote, make orders; there is no real educational interaction. But there could be more interaction - by transmitting computer programmes over the air for example. And the videodisc coupled to mini computers would provide moving pictures to be used in relation to questions and answers off a computer.

How might voluntary organisations, community groups and so on use these interactive services? We were told that advice services are already looking into the use of the new technologies. Up-dating of information to local services throughout the country was one obvious use for cable. One organisation is providing a limited range of advice - on choosing an insurance policy for instance - for Prestel users.

Groups making video programmes might have an increased potential audience. National agencies could make a programme for local distribution to the cable stations where they might have a local dimension added. And using interactive services groups might make a video programme to be stored in a central 'library' so that cable subscribers could call up the specific programme they wished to see. Such a service is already operating in Newfoundland where a local cable service has an index of about 400 programmes that subscribers can call up.

THE EFFECT ON EXISTING BROADCAST SERVICES

One speaker was worried about the effect of falling television audiences so far as education and social action broadcasting is concerned. Some companies are already placing their own local, often education and social action, programmes under threat because they fear the effect of falling audiences.

But it was also argued that any threat was caused by audiences choosing to watch programmes on cable rather than those broadcast by the existing services. Surely we should welcome this increased range of choice that would be available? Not all agreed: more channels did not necessarily mean more choice. A satisfactory level of regulation or control or facilitation is crucial.

Another speaker pointed out that Hunt had argued that with cable providing some sort of local service it would no longer be necessary for the ITV system to provide a regional service. This was alarming, especially since considerable doubt had been expressed at the conference that there would be sufficient money for much local programming. Additionally it was clear that large parts of the country would not be cabled for some considerable time. Many viewers could find themselves with no regional or local television programming.

A representative of an agency working with the handicapped similarly argued that despite the interactive services allegedly available through cable which might help the handicapped, so far as television is concerned they need to use that medium to increase public awareness. The provision of interactive services would not make up for the loss of access to that audience if the disappearance of educational and social action material on the existing networks became a reality.

But a broadcaster argued that so long as an area of broadcasting could demonstrate audience size it would survive. There might be a few marginal losses, in television in particular, but these will tend to be the areas which are not particularly effective anyway.

VIEWS ON THE DAY

*ROBIN MOSS, Chairman, Educational Television Association
(Head of Educational Programme Services, IBA from late August 1983)*

The interesting point about this technology is that it is really not our master but our servant, Robin Moss said. He had been particularly struck by the comment that engineers are rarely asked the right questions by decision makers because decision makers don't actually properly define the problem that they want to be solved. Speakers had tried to point the seminar towards defining the sort of education and social action activity they wanted from which it would be possible to ensure that decision makers provided the

appropriate new technologies. Many people at the conference had expressed cynicism about the likely decisions that would be made about cable and satellite, but that may be our fault for not having got our act together.

The financing of cable output has been a recurring theme during the seminar. What can we offer to those who will gain control of some of these franchises? What can we say to them? What influences do we want to bring to bear on them? We need to decide. But a vigorous local community might prove an attraction to a local franchise holder.

The influence of independent producers on the arrangements for Channel 4 showed that a group with a clear purpose can influence allegedly hard-hearted government. There is a case for those of us concerned with social action and educational broadcasting to work together to influence decisions on cable and satellites.

Much of what had been discussed related to predictions: about the nature of audiences, the potential contributors, the pricing, union attitudes, resistance to cost and more. But who would have predicted that Sianel 4 Cymru would have been such an apparently massive success, or that Britain would have the largest number of video recorders per head of the population of any country in the world? Viewer behaviour is difficult to predict.

Robin Moss concluded by pointing out that education itself is changing in ways that the educational system has not even begun to face. The changes are shifting the concept from being totally teacher centred and dominated towards the learner-centred, study centred, individualised activity. Education is changing under the same sorts of pressures that are changing broadcasting and communications.

FINAL SESSION

WHAT NEXT?

John Cain introduced the session by pointing out that there was no intention of setting up an organisation or unit, but the planning group had felt it would be useful for participants to be given the opportunity to indicate whether they felt any further action should be taken.

Again discussion was wide ranging. It was generally felt that those concerned with social action and educational broadcasting are generally unaware of the opportunities cable and satellite may provide. There was a need to rectify this.

Relevant agencies should seek to influence decisions being made about cable and satellite but immediate action would be needed to effect the contents of the White Paper. However, even after publication of the White Paper it would be possible to lobby MPs and the relevant government agencies drawing attention to the requirements of educational and social action agencies.

It was agreed that a paper would be circulated to all participants to encourage them to work within their own organisations and areas of interest to encourage a wider debate about the implications of cable and satellite and a copy of this document is included in this report as appendix VI.

It was also agreed that there should be a second event in the autumn and the Planning Group agreed to look at that possibility.

APPENDIX I

PARTICIPANTS

Planning Group

NEIL BARNES, Senior Education Officer, Continuing Education, BBC
TONY BATES, Head of AVMRG, Institute of Educational Technology, Open University
JOHN CAIN, Controller, Public Affairs, BBC
JOHN HOWKINS, Editor of "InterMedia", International Institute of Communications
ROBIN McCRON, Research Associate, Centre for Mass Communication Research, University of Leicester
CHARLIE MAYO, Education Officer, IBA
ROBIN MOSS, Chairman, Educational Television Association
VINCENT THOMPSON, Assistant Director, Council for Educational Technology
EILEEN WARE, Information Officer, Media Project, The Volunteer Centre

Participants

JOHN ALEXANDER, Chief Education Officer, School Broadcasting Council, BBC
FRANCES BERRIGAN, Television Producer
AVTAR BRAH, Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Open University
PAUL COUESLANT, Community and Continuing Education Officer, London Weekend Television
CATHERINE DAWSON, Information Officer/Editor, NCVO Information Service, National Council for Voluntary Organisations
ANNE DILLON, Project Director, Mediscreen
JOHN DUKE, Consultant, Council for Educational Technology
TONY EDWARDS, ETV Director, Petras Television, Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic
MIKE FENTIMAN, Editor, Community Programme Unit, BBC
ROBERT GILDER, Director, Audio Visual Centre, The University of Newcastle upon Tyne
LEN GOULD, Principal Training Adviser, Manpower Services Commission
ROY FAIBISH, Executive Vice President Europe, Cablecasting Ltd
T F EVANS, Department of Extra Mural Studies, University of London
TONY HARWOOD, Principal Engineering Information Officer, IBA
PAT HAWKER, Engineering Information Services, IBA
SALLY HAWKINS, Broadcasting Adviser, National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux
JOY HILL, Media Project Development Officer, Wales Council for Voluntary Action
MIKE HODGKINSON, Development Officer, Media Project, The Volunteer Centre
RICHARD HOOPER, Chief Executive, Information Services, British Telecom
CHRIS JONES, Acting Head of Educational Programme Services, IBA
PAT LEGGATT, Head of Engineering Information Department, BBC
PETER LEWIS
BILL McALISTER, Director, ICA
ROBERT McCANN, Head of the Department of Educational Television, Moray House College of Education
SUE MADDOCK, Family Planning Association
JEREMY MITCHELL, Director, National Consumer Council
LESLIE MORPHY, Chief Executive, Broadcasting Support Services
JOSEPH F MURRAY, Adviser in Educational Technology, Scottish Council for Educational Technology
CAROLINE OLIVER, Age Concern England
AUSTIN REEVES, Secretary, Deaf Broadcasting Campaign
ALAN ROGERS, Head of Current Affairs Magazine Programmes, BBC

TOM SHAW, Director, Northern Ireland Committee for Educational Development
JOE SIMPSON, Assistant Director, Community Service Volunteers
ROBIN STENHAM, Open University
ARTHUR STOCK, Director, National Institute of Adult Education
MICHAEL TRACEY, Head of Broadcasting Research, British Film Institute
JOHN TUCKER, Director, John Tucker Associates Ltd
ROGER WATKINS, Assistant Director, The Volunteer Centre
KEITH YEOMANS

THE IMPLICATIONS OF CABLE AND SATELLITES FOR SOCIAL ACTION AND EDUCATIONAL BROADCASTING - Seminar, 20 January 1983

SETTING THE SCENE

The following is intended as a brief summary of the chief 1982 events and decisions as of mid-December 1982.

- (1) 4th March 1982. Home Secretary announced Britain would start Direct Broadcasting by Satellite (DBS) in 1986, allocating the first two spare channels to BBC.
- (2) March 1982. Government's Cabinet Information Technology Advisory Panel (ITAP) Report. Calls for rapid decisions to enable cabling up of UK financed by private sector as part of drive towards "Information Technology" (IT).
- (3) 22nd March 1982. Government sets up 3-man Hunt Committee to examine the implications of cable proposals in ITAP especially as regards effects on broadcasting.
- (4) 12th October 1982. 'Report of the Enquiry into Cable Expansion and Broadcasting Policy' (Hunt Report).
- (5) 23rd November 1982. House of Lords debate on subject.
- (6) 23rd November 1982. Part Committee Report on Satellite Technical Standards. Favours MAC (Multiplexed Analogue Component) rather than extended PAL (Phase Alternating Line) system. The former supported by IBA, the latter by BBC. Eight days later the Home Secretary accepts Part Committee recommendations.
- (7) 2nd December 1982. House of Commons Broadcasting (Cable Systems) debate. Home Secretary gives views on Hunt Report and promises White Paper in February 1983. "No decisions on how we shall proceed will be taken until the House has pronounced its opinion and has had another chance to look at the White Paper". Legislation to follow "though not in this session".
- (8) 8th December 1982. Prime Minister makes speech at IT 82 Conference reiterating Government's intention to press ahead with cable plans.

SOME IMPORTANT HUNT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

(NB. These are in note form. See Report itself for full details.)

- (a) Minimum of constraint for maximum variety
- (b) Need for innovation, experiment and sensitivity
- (c) Four elements - cable providers, cable operators, programme providers, programme makers

- (d) Cable services must carry BBC and ITV programmes and future DBS services
- (e) Major national sporting occasions to be protected for all viewers
- (f) No "pay-per-view" operations, which would prevent operators charging for individual programmes
- (g) New cable authority to be set up to award local franchises and monitor operators' performance
- (h) No regulation on programme range or balance
- (i) Cable operators to be under the same obligations as the BBC and ITV on matters of taste and decency, but adult material could be available on special subscription
- (j) No immediate quota on the number of foreign programmes
- (k) No political organisations or religious groups to control channels
- (l) Ten-year initial franchise period
- (m) Cable to carry advertising
- (n) No limit to the number of new programme channels for cable

NOTE:

In the 2nd December House of Commons debate the Home Secretary, without any commitment, backed virtually all the Hunt recommendations. He confirmed a new authority would be set up and that it would not be toothless. It would be able to give (and withdraw) franchises, as well as monitor and intervene. The Government would think further about pay-per-view. The authority would encourage British production but a quota system on cable would be inhibiting. Further consideration would be given to 'adult' programmes and the problems of 'locking' them.

JC/MJC
20.12.82

APPENDIX III

THE IMPLICATIONS OF CABLE AND SATELLITES FOR SOCIAL ACTION AND EDUCATIONAL
BROADCASTING: A Seminar - 20 January 1983

READING LIST

We would particularly recommend that participants try to read the first two publications on this list.

Report of the Inquiry into Cable Expansion and Broadcasting Policy
(Hunt Report). HMSO 1982 Cmnd 8679

New Technologies, New Policies. John Howkins. British Film Institute. 1982

Television in the Eighties - the Total Equation. R Moorfoot. BBC 1982

The Third Age of Broadcasting. Ed Brian Wenham. Faber & Faber 1982

Direct Broadcasting by Satellite. Report of Home Office Study. HMSO 1981

Cable Systems: A Report by the Information Technology Advisory Panel.
Cabinet Office 1982

Communications technology - and educational view. John Cain. European
Broadcasting Union Review. Vol 31. No 6. November 1980

The Council for Educational Technology's Response to the Report of the
Inquiry into Cable Expansion and Broadcasting Policy. Chris Humphries.
Council for Educational Technology 1983

The Development of Cable Systems and Services (White Paper). HMSO April 1983.
Cmnd 8866

THE BACKGROUND

Whitehall has started the countdown for launching British broadcasting into the age when households will receive programmes direct from space satellites and much of the United Kingdom could be 'wired up' for cable television.

On 4 March the Home Secretary made the historic announcement that Britain would start Direct Broadcasting by Satellite (DBS) in 1986, allocating the first two space channels to the BBC.

On 22 March following a Cabinet technology panel report, the Home Secretary set up a three man committee under Lord Hunt to examine the implications of cable, the maintenance of programme standards and the question of how developments are regulated.

This BBC briefing is a layman's guide to the history, technology and future trends of satellite and cable.

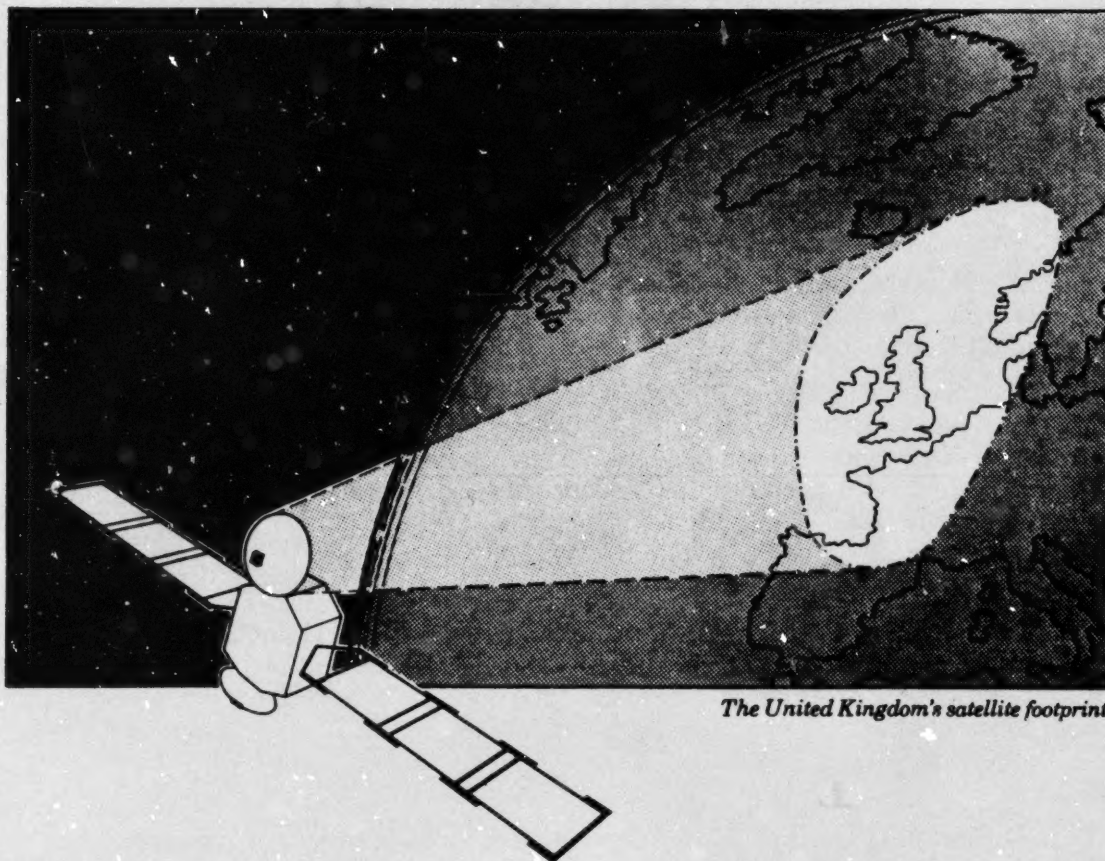
DIRECT BROADCASTING by SATELLITE

SATELLITE
+
CABLE

The Terrestrial Picture

Most homes in Britain today receive their television pictures from the nearest transmitter, via an aerial. They arrive 'terrestrially' over the air from one of the 590 transmitting stations needed to cover the country.

But Britain's first television satellite – with its own 'footprint' covering the whole of Britain – will beam programmes directly into the home from its position 36,000 kilometres (22,300 miles) up in space.



The United Kingdom's satellite footprint.

Initially, and subject to further channel allocations by the Government, it will transmit two new BBC services, a subscription channel and another called 'Window On The World' (See page 4). Existing BBC and ITV networks will continue to be carried by conventional transmitters.

The new satellite, being developed by a consortium of British Telecom, GEC/Marconi and British Aerospace, will be powered by solar panels with an operational lifespan of up to seven years. Other satellites will be kept in reserve.

Located at 31 Degrees West – on the Equator somewhere above the tiny Brazilian island of St. Paul in the Atlantic Ocean – the satellite will appear to be stationary. That is because it will be in 'geostationary' orbit . . . moving through space at the same speed at which Earth spins.

The History

Satellites have been used in telecommunications for many years. 'Telstar' and 'Early Bird' paved the way in the 1960s. In America today pictures regularly travel from coast to coast via satellite, but they finally reach television sets via a ground transmission station or cable systems. Beaming programmes directly into people's homes is a new development.

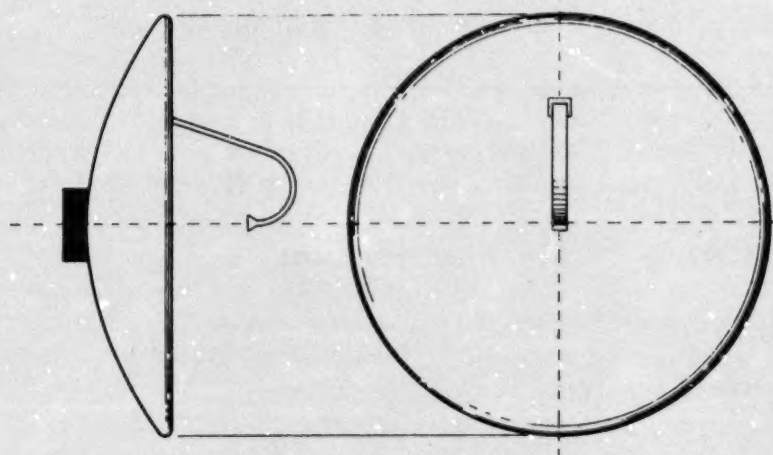
In 1977 the World Administrative Radio Conference (WARC), the international forum on wavelengths, allocated each country outside the Americas five satellite channels (even the Vatican City State has five). WARC also defined the reception areas to be covered by each country's satellite beam. Those areas have become known as national satellite 'footprints'.

The individual 'footprints' will spill over into other countries. This means the United Kingdom satellite services could also be received in Ireland, most of France, Northern Spain, the Benelux countries, Northern Germany and part of Scandinavia.

How Direct Broadcasting by Satellite Works

Television pictures are sent up to the satellite from a large dish aerial at an earth station. The signals are then transmitted back to earth. To receive those signals in the home the viewer will need a 'dish' aerial of his own – or access to a community dish aerial – just as he needs an aerial to pick up 'terrestrial' pictures.

The dish aerial, less than one metre wide, must point directly at the satellite. With elaborate adjustment the viewer might also be able to pick up transmissions from other countries' satellites if their 'footprint' touches Britain.



A dish aerial for home reception of TV signals direct from a satellite.

The cost of the dish aerals has been estimated at about £250, possibly falling as sales expand. A future possibility is a flat, wall-mounted aerial. The dish aerial could also be compressed into a flatter, corrugated form.

Two special boxes, one behind the dish aerial and the other indoors, will convert the satellite signals into picture messages which standard television sets can accept.

Viewers who pay to receive the BBC's planned subscription service will be equipped with a device, possibly resembling a credit card, to de-scramble the signal.

The Satellite Channels

The first two British satellite channels have been allocated by the Home Office to the BBC. Others will be authorised later. Each channel will carry a television picture signal and a number of digital stereo sound channels (for sending signals in coded pulses rather than sound waves).

Subject to agreement within the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) two sound channels will accompany each television picture. The new generation of television sets will be able to reproduce stereo sound. The other sound channels can be picked up by dish aerials in the same way as television pictures. They can then be played through a hi-fi system to achieve superior stereo sound.

BBC Radio hopes to use this facility for music broadcasts. The BBC World Service could also be carried by satellite, but the limits of the 'footprint' have to be borne in mind.

The BBC's Plans

The BBC has announced that it will run a subscription service on one channel and a service called 'Window On The World' on the other.

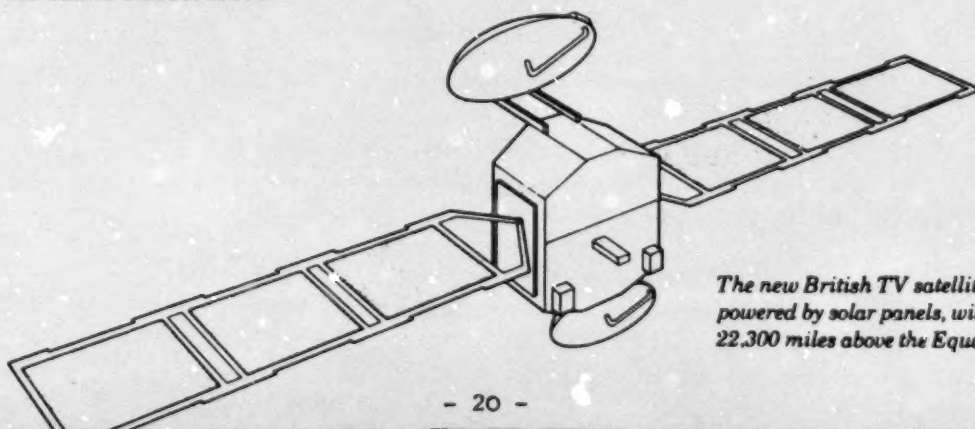
The Subscription Channel will provide a blend of feature films, special events, including orchestral, operatic, dramatic, sport and popular entertainment and, hopefully, archive material.

Window On The World will show the best television programmes from around the world, including repeats of BBC and, possibly, ITV productions. The Home Office has said that this channel will be funded initially by a supplementary licence fee for those who wish to receive the service. In the long term the BBC hopes that both satellite channels will be funded mainly from the subscription channel income.

Profits from the subscription channel will be ploughed back into productions for the prime networks, BBC 1 and BBC 2. Thus the ordinary licence-payer will gain as a result of these developments, for the BBC has said it will not remove any existing programme material from BBC 1 and BBC 2 for exclusive showing on the satellite channels.

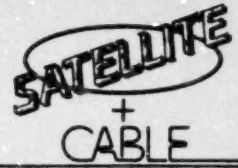
Satellite and Cable ... The Connection

Satellite broadcasting can also be used alongside cable television. A cable station could have its own more powerful dish aerial and relay authorised satellite transmissions to all its cable subscribers.



The new British TV satellite, powered by solar panels, will be positioned 22,300 miles above the Equator.

CABLE



The History

Cable distribution in Britain actually began at the end of the last century when some people were able to listen to West End plays in their homes. Now 2.6 million households, mainly in built-up areas, receive their television pictures from cable connected to their homes. It helps provide better picture quality in bad reception areas.

Some 1.5 million of those homes are linked to cable systems provided by 440 commercial operators. They pay an annual charge of about £15. Other schemes are run by housing associations and local authorities. The subscribers receive BBC 1, BBC 2 and ITV programmes, sometimes with additional options.

It is estimated that another two million households, close to existing cable networks, could easily be connected.

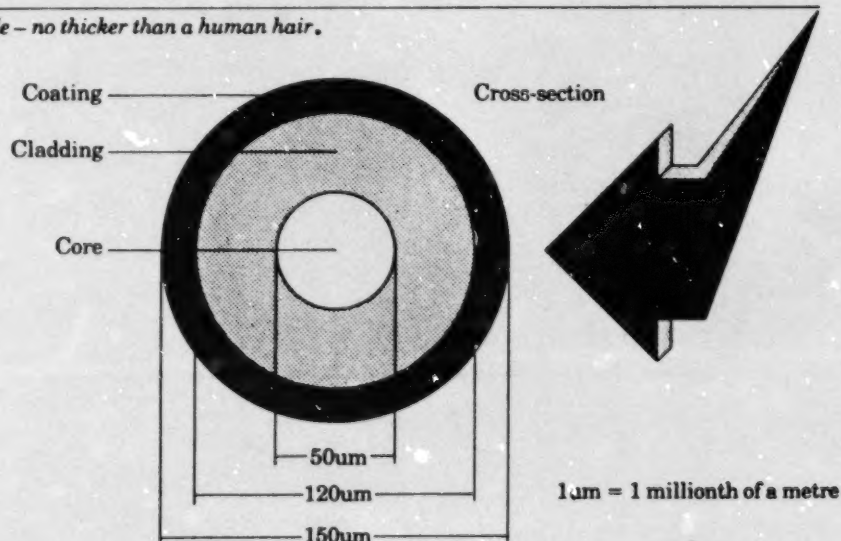
Last year the Home Secretary licensed six companies for 13 subscription television experiments. The BBC is involved in one of them, 'Showcable', run in association with Visionhire. Subscribers, who pay a fee of £6 - £12 a month, get alternative programmes, mainly feature films at the moment. The two year experiment will help the Home Office assess the interest in cable.

The Technology

Cable subscribers have special decoder boxes linked to their television sets so they can receive the service.

In America some cable networks have a 100 channel capability. Most British systems can carry only four. But now with the introduction of wide-band systems using coaxial cable, or optical fibres where signals are passed along a glass thread the thickness of a human hair, British operators could have the same capacity. But the development of cable is going to be expensive. It has been estimated that it would cost upwards of £2,500million to 'wire up' the main population centres.

Fibre optic cable - no thicker than a human hair.



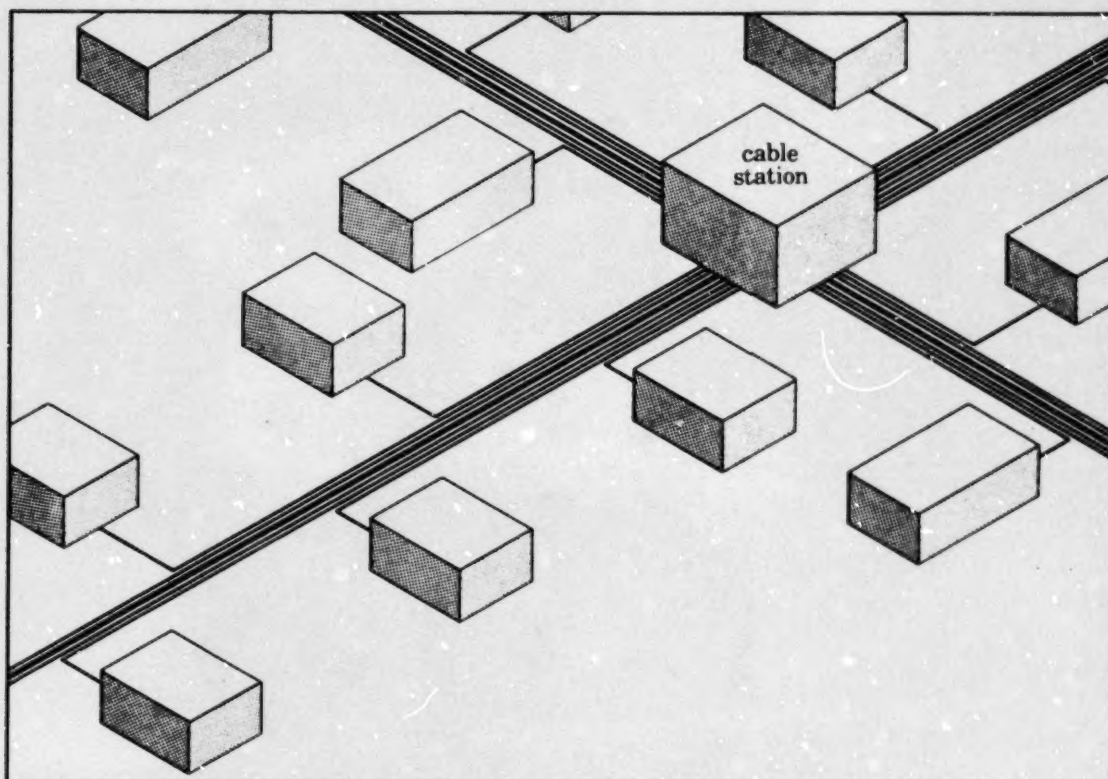
The Potential of Cable

To date, the chief role of cable has been to take interference-free television pictures into the homes of viewers in built-up areas where reception is poor. In the future satellite services could be relayed in the same way.

The Information Technology Advisory Panel has also drawn attention to other uses for a re-developed cable system, including additional television channels and community programmes. Greenwich in South London already has a service featuring locally made programmes.

Interactive services could open up new areas for the distribution of information and home services by cable . . . electronic shopping, banking, meter reading and security systems for fire and burglary.

Two-way cable of this kind means that electronic voting could be used for opinion polls or for immediate audience reaction to programmes, as happens in America already. Cable can also be used for giving clearer signals for radio channels.



A cable network with each house linked to the cable station.

The Politics

The Government's Cabinet Information Technology Advisory Panel has called for a quick decision on the future of cable so the private sector can start planning the redevelopment of cable in Britain.

If this is to be done the Government has to decide whether it will allow private companies to lay cable and to own the networks, or whether it should be left to British Telecom to retain its position as the main provider of telecommunications systems in Britain.

It has also to decide what form of control should be exercised over the programmes and information distributed. There is strong pressure that programme standards should be maintained and that the financial footing of the BBC and ITV should remain secure.

There is also a call from the cable companies for 'deregulation' – to be allowed to operate freely and competitively, possibly being freed from their present obligation to carry existing BBC and ITV services.

The Hunt Committee will report at the end of September 1982.

The Home Secretary has identified the broadcasting policy aspects of the committee's inquiry in the following terms: *'They include such matters as: whether cable operators should control cable systems and provide programme services; programme standards, and range and balance of programme content; the obligation on cable systems to relay UK broadcasting services; whether advertising should be permitted; and the appropriate supervisory framework.'*

SATELLITE

+

CABLE

THE JARGON EXPLAINED

COAXIAL CABLE

Copper wire surrounded by insulation and a copper mesh conducting screen, capable of carrying television and sound signals, commonly used in connecting rooftop aerial to television set.

DECODER

Electronic device to unscramble coded signals.

DEREGULATION

Term used by cable operators who want to be freed from statutory regulations on the services they can offer.

DIGITAL SOUND

Superior quality sound signals created by transmitting in digital (pulses) rather than sound wave form.

DBS

Direct Broadcasting by Satellite.

EBU

European Broadcasting Union, the co-ordinating body for television affairs in Western Europe.

FIBRE OPTIC CABLE

Hair-like threads of pure glass which can transmit signals in the form of light pulses.

FOOTPRINT

The area in which people can receive television pictures from an individual satellite.

GEOSTATIONARY

A satellite is said to be in geostationary orbit when it is moving at the same speed at which the earth spins, so appearing to be stationary.

INTERACTIVE

Two-way communication giving the cable subscriber access to such facilities as electronic shopping and banking and participation in programme polls etc.

PRESTEL

Trade name for British Telecom's viewdata system transmitted via telephone lines, mainly for business use.

SCRAMBLED SIGNAL

An electronic signal modified so as to make it unreceivable without decoding equipment.

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE

Alternative television programme service paid for directly by the subscriber.

TERRESTRIAL

Television signals sent over the earth's surface from a land-based transmitter rather than through space.

31 DEGREES WEST

The longitudinal position above the Equator from where the British television satellite will transmit.

TRANSPONDER

Channel on a satellite which transmits electronic signals.

WARC

The World Administrative Radio Conference. It drew up a plan in 1977 for Direct Broadcasting by Satellite, giving each country outside the Americas five satellite channels.



Cable Television in the United Kingdom

Since the beginning of broadcasting in the mid-1920s a number of listeners and viewers have received their programmes, not off-air, but by subscribing to a wired distribution system. The programmes are picked-up at a central receiving point, advantageously sited to give good reception using equipment designed to minimise interference. Signals are then distributed to the subscriber over some sort of cable. The operating company usually charges both a connection fee and a rental, with subscribers having the option of providing their own receivers or renting from the cable operator. Although this practice originated with sound broadcasting, it was extended to television in the early 1950s.

Each cable system is operated under a special licence from the Home Office; the licence specifies the technical standards to be met and the programmes which may be distributed. Subscribers need a normal receiving licence.

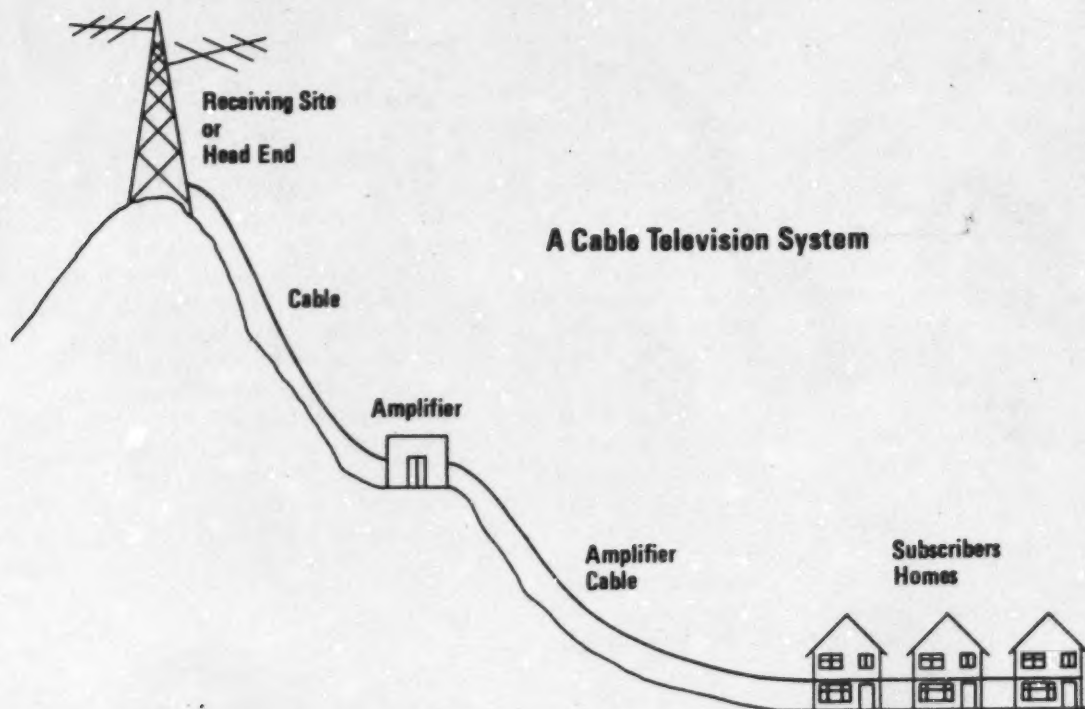
Cable Reception

One of the factors which contributed to the growth of cable television was that a cable company could often offer a service in a particular area before the broadcasters, since cable made use of advantageously sited aerial systems and sophisticated receivers, whilst building up the transmitter network took time. The advent of Independent

Television reinforced this trend, as did the introduction of UHF transmissions and colour television. In the case of UHF, where signals propagate in a manner similar to light, and thus do not reach communities which are in valleys or otherwise situated so as to be 'shadowed' from the main transmitter, large numbers of low power relay stations are required to supplement the coverage from the 51 high-powered main stations. Cable operators could often supply a service to such communities well in advance of the building of the local transmitter. A cable system frequently offered an 'out of area' additional ITV service, thus giving the subscriber a wider choice of programmes. The terms of the licence issued by the Home Office, however, have until recently, prevented the distribution of programme material other than from off air broadcasts.

Technically speaking, the object of a cable system is to pick up the required programmes at the receiving site, usually referred to as the 'head-end', and to bring them to the subscribers' homes with the minimum deterioration in quality. Losses in signal caused by the cable are compensated for by inserting amplifiers as required. In a well designed system the picture seen by the subscriber should be at least as good as that available off-air in the locality to a viewer equipped with a reasonable aerial installation, and for 'out of area' programmes the cable signal

will usually be much better than that available to the viewer were he to install a conventional aerial system.



Distribution Systems

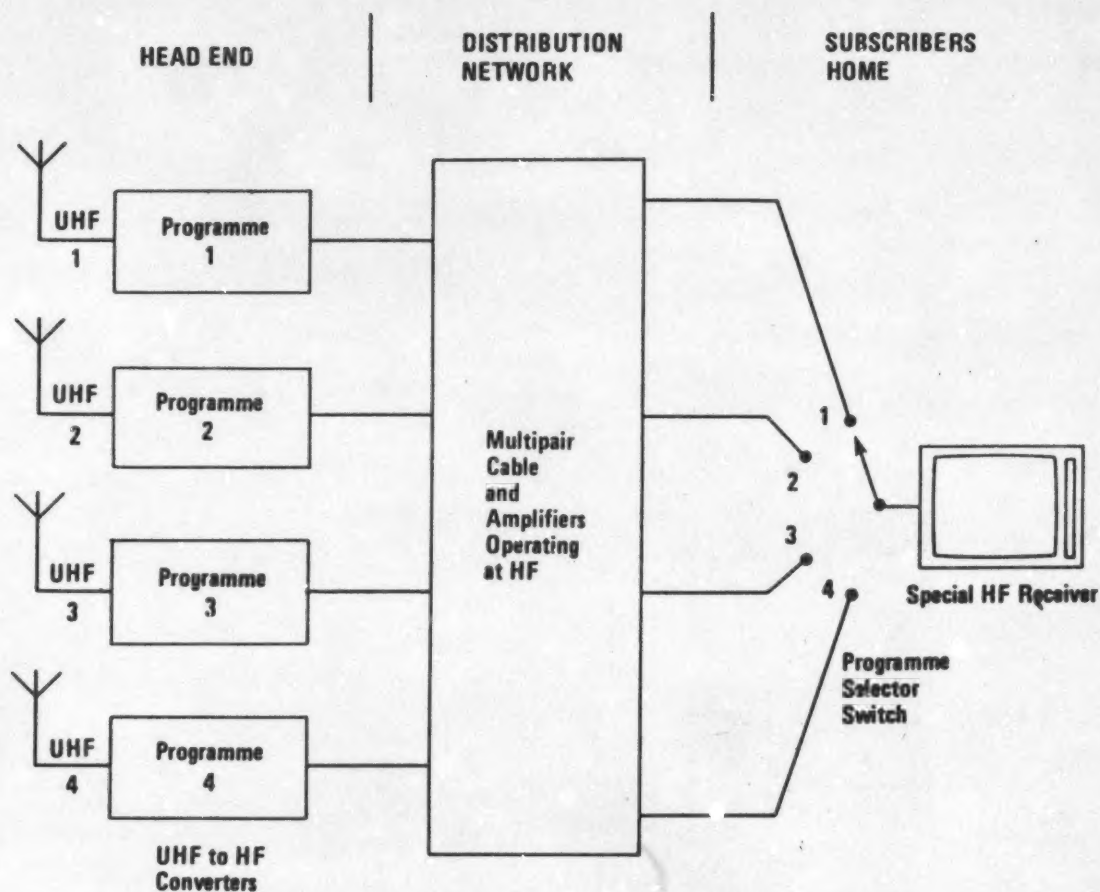
Cable distribution is usually effected by one of two systems, the older HF (High Frequency) system or, a later development, distribution at VHF (Very High Frequency) or UHF (Ultra High Frequency).

In the case of HF distribution, each of the signals to be distributed is received and its

modulation transferred to a common HF carrier, usually about 10MHz in frequency, (each programme being distributed at the same carrier frequency). A separate pair of wires carries each signal, customer selection of the wanted programme is made in the viewer's home by means of a switch which connects the receiver (tuned to the HF carrier frequency) to the appropriate pair of wires. Sound is usually distributed at audio frequency on yet another pair of

wires. Thus the cable required to distribute six programmes needs to contain six pairs of vision and sound wires and, once installed, it cannot distribute more than six programmes. This is a fundamental limitation of the HF system which, although capable of excellent results, is nevertheless now

considered to be obsolete. It is also worth noting that the receiver used is non-standard, being designed to receive only the HF distribution frequency, although it is possible to use a normal receiver with a special converter.

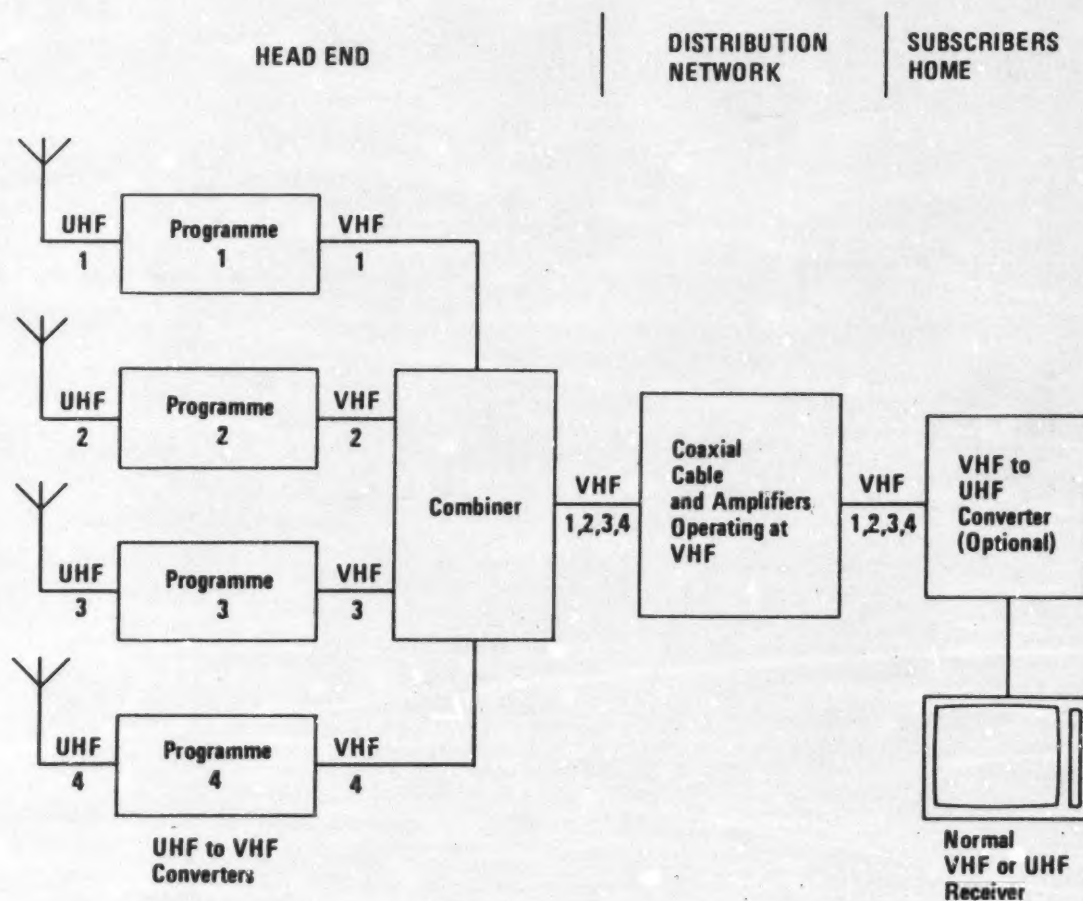


H.F. Cable Distribution

VHF Distribution

More common nowadays is the use of VHF distribution in the 30 to 300 MHz band. Here the signals received at the head-end are converted in frequency from the incoming UHF to VHF and distributed on a co-axial cable. All programmes go on the same cable but a different frequency is used for each programme. Again, amplifiers compensate for cable losses, (which are lower at VHF than UHF, hence the use of conversion at the head-end), and

these amplifiers may be channelised, where a separate amplifier is used for each signal; or wideband, where some or all of the distributed signals make use of a common amplifier. The system is more flexible than HF distribution since further programmes can be added by using additional frequencies. This may require fitting additional amplifiers, where channelised equipment is used, and care must be taken to avoid interaction between the various distributed signals when adding to an existing system which uses wideband equipment.



VHF Cable Distribution

The choice of distribution frequencies is agreed by the Home Office to avoid interference from and to other users; this choice also affects the number of programmes that can be transmitted. Subscribers can use a standard receiver, provided it has a VHF tuner, but for the UHF receivers normally available in the UK relatively cheap VHF to UHF converters are required.

For large systems serving subscribers spread throughout a community, referred to as CATV (Community Antenna TV), VHF distribution is generally used. For smaller systems, serving a block of flats or an hotel, known as MATV (Master Antenna TV), it is now common to distribute at UHF. Such distribution can be at the off-air frequencies, providing that care is taken to avoid signal degradation due to unwanted reception of the off air signal on the distribution cables themselves. Sometimes translation to other UHF channels is used. Where UHF distribution is used standard UHF receivers are suitable, of course.

Capacity of Cable Systems

The number of programmes that can be carried on a cable system is limited, technically, by a number of factors. For HF systems the principal constraint is the number of pairs of wires that can be built into a single cable without the signal on one pair interacting with that on another.

For VHF systems operating in the frequency range 30 to 300MHz the limitations are set by the technical parameters of the television signal which, for the PAL system used in the UK occupies

a channel 8MHz wide, and by the characteristics of receivers. At first sight it might seem that a system operating in the VHF band could support thirty three channels but in practice this is not so. Transmission on adjacent channels makes reception difficult. Certain other channels must also be avoided to prevent interference due to the local oscillator, and the image frequency interference inherently present with the superheterodyne system of reception. In practice this means that the number of channels that can be carried is limited to about 12.

Optical fibres offer the possibility of an increased number of channels by carrying programmes on a beam of coherent light contained within a fine glass fibre. The electrical band width of such a system is quite wide. An increase in the number of channels can be achieved by putting a number of channels on one fibre, with several fibres forming a cable. Systems have already been tried which can carry 12 channels per fibre.

Satellite Broadcasting

The next significant step in broadcast technology will be the use of geosynchronous satellites for broadcasting direct to the home. This offers the broadcaster an opportunity to provide marked improvements in picture and sound quality by adopting a new system of transmission which avoids defects inherent in the PAL system currently in use. The IBA's MAC (Multiplexed Analogue Components) system for direct satellite broadcasting (DBS) has been developed for this purpose and the government have recently announced that, after due consideration of

systems for DBS by the Part Committee, MAC will be used for the UK's satellite broadcast services. MAC not only provides better picture quality, but also supports up to eight high-quality sound or data channels.

Such signals will also be carried on cable systems which will need to cater for the wider bandwidth required.

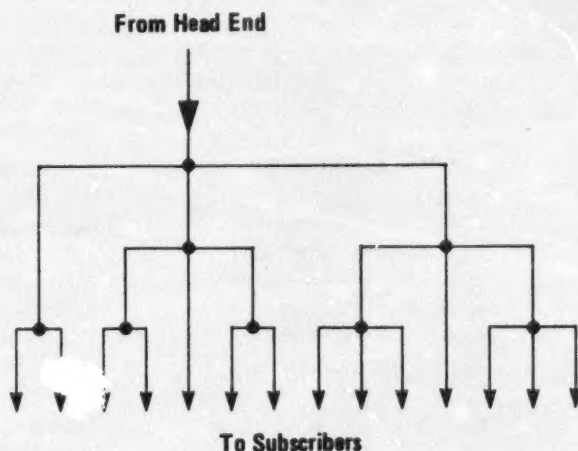
Development of Cable

Recent developments, particularly in the United States, have shown how the potential of cable as a distribution medium can be exploited. Distribution of programmes to cable systems using communications (as opposed to direct broadcasting) satellites across the nation is commonplace and systems offering thirty or more channels are now in existence. Amongst the programmes

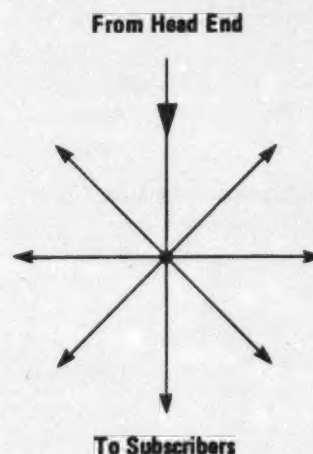
supplied are pay TV channels where the subscriber can only receive a particular channel upon payment of an additional sum. The techniques by which pay channels are made available vary, some relying on 'scrambling' the signal and supplying additional 'descrambling' equipment to the pay TV subscriber, whilst other systems rely on connecting the service remotely to the distribution point supplying the paying subscriber, upon payment of the appropriate additional rental.

Interactive Services

What is also of great interest is the possibility offered by the ability of cable to operate in both directions. In addition to supplying programmes to the subscriber, it is possible for information to be sent from the subscriber's home to some other destination. It is in this field



Tree and Branch Structure



Star Structure

that the undeveloped potential of cable lies since it enables such services as dial-a-programme, home shopping, meter reading and home security to be offered by the cable operator. Such a system can also support interactive services such as videophone and electronic mail. These systems are already being used on an experimental basis in the USA and are being investigated in the UK.

When interactive services are taken into consideration the layout of the cable system itself becomes significant. Older networks were usually built using the system known as tree and branch. As the name suggests the signals from the head-end are applied to a trunk feeder which then supplies a number of branches, in turn splitting into smaller branches. Obviously, in such a system, information coming back from the subscriber needs to pass through a number of junctions before arriving at a destination such as the head-end or another subscriber. Each junction passed requires additional equipment to handle the signal and hence a more complex system.

A more modern layout is the star system whereby the signal is fed to a central star-point and all subscribers are fed by individual feeders radiating from this point. Although an interactive system is by no means impossible using the tree and branch structure it is more practicable when the star layout is used since there is only one junction in the reverse path.

The Future of Cable in the United Kingdom

Early in 1982 the government set up a committee under the chairmanship of Lord Hunt to look into the future of cable distribution systems in the United Kingdom. The report of this committee recommended the extension of cable systems and significant deregulation, particularly concerning the material which may be transmitted. All indications are that the government will follow these recommendations and a new body will be formed to supervise cable systems. In fact, even before the Hunt Committee sat, a number of trial pay TV schemes had already been licenced, supplying material such as feature films to subscribers.

It is however important to realise the extent to which cable can grow. The best estimates of cable development in the UK are that it will only be economic for about 50% of houses to be connected to cable systems. For the remainder of the population the only practicable way in which broadcast services, can be enjoyed, whether terrestrial based or using geostationary satellites, is by means of direct reception using a domestic aerial system. This is particularly true of smaller, rural, communities.

PAPER FOR PARTICIPANTS AS FOLLOW-UP TO SEMINAR

On March 7 a paper was sent to those who had attended the seminar from Robin Moss, Chairman of the Educational Television Association, on behalf of the Planning Group. A covering letter reminded participants that this paper was the outcome of the event. Those sharing the concerns of the Planning Group were invited to join in any of the activities listed in the document - the success or failure of any campaign being dependent on how far individuals managed to inform and stimulate colleagues to make their views public.

CABLE TELEVISION: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL ACTION AND EDUCATION

On 20th January 1983, a specially invited group known to be concerned about the implications of cable and satellite television for social action and educational broadcasting attended a seminar on the subject in London. At the end of the meeting it was agreed that a discussion document would be prepared for circulation among those present and to support any campaign that might develop to try to ensure that the new technologies should be utilised as far as possible for the common good.

Social Action and Educational Broadcasting: Common Purposes

Although those with an interest in social action and/or educational broadcasting come from a very wide range of organisations, whose aims appear at first sight to have little to do with each other, some common purposes may be defined:

- (1) Their aims include an intention to promote or produce personal and social change or development.
- (2) They tend to have, in the context of broadcasting, a particular interest in what is called 'follow-up' or 'response' to broadcasting.
- (3) Similarly, they lay particular emphasis on the concept of partnership between broadcasters and other agencies, as a vital component in planning successful broadcasting activities.

The New Technology and Policy

"Many of the new technologies.....are not so much new intechanical terms but in their political favour and commercial availability" (J Howkins). Two complementary elements in the discussions about cable and satellites seem particularly striking. First, engineers appear agreed that the imperatives governing policy in this area are certainly not technical; secondly, thus far in Britain by far the loudest and most influential voices appear to have been commercial and industrial in nature. Neither of these facts is very surprising. For those concerned about the future of social action and educational broadcasting it is nevertheless urgent and important that policies for technical and commercial operations in this area should take proper account of social action and educational need, at national, regional and local level.

Possible Campaign Aims

- (1) Those concerned with social action and educational broadcasting are generally unaware of the opportunities cable and satellite television may provide, and unconvinced of their ability to influence government or regional and local agencies, including franchise-holders. A major purpose of any

campaign should be to inform voluntary and statutory agencies, and bodies concerned with education and training, about relevant issues, and potential action.

(2) Engineers seem to be agreed that provision of full wide-band facilities for users via fibre-optic cable is feasible and financially possible now. Since such a system offers citizens greater opportunities for participation in social activities including education, it should be provided, if necessary with the support of public funds, from the outset, not added later, as the Hunt Report suggests.

(3) Similarly, as the CET Response to the Hunt Report put it, "it is crucial that.....cable television has the potential to be available to all areas of the community that may have cause to call upon it". In other words, there should be a commitment by government to ensure that cable facilities are provided nationally, not merely to those already advantaged.

(4) Over the next few months those concerned with the future of social action and/or educational broadcasting should try to influence local members of parliament as well as relevant government agencies, to endeavour to support those parts of the Hunt Report that favour educational and social action broadcasting and to question those that do not and inform interested parties.

(5) In the long run, if this campaign develops, the continuing concern and awareness aroused could and should lead to those responsible for local as well as national arrangements modifying plans and to take proper account of social action and educational needs.

(6) A second meeting will be organised for the autumn of 1983. Vincent Thompson, Assistant Director of the Council for Educational Technology has agreed to convene this, in conjunction with the Educational Television Association.

JRM/vad
7.3.83

THE VOLUNTEER CENTRE MEDIA PROJECT provides an information, advisory and monitoring service for broadcasters and voluntary/statutory organisations working in the general area of community involvement through television and radio. It collects and disseminates information on activities in this area and encourages, where necessary, additional research. The Project is staffed by: Mike Hodgkinson - development officer; Eileen Ware - information officer; Caryn Higgs - information assistant and secretaries. Kaz Mugridge and Lynn Kendall.

THE MEDIA PROJECT NEWS is published quarterly and contains articles and information from broadcasters and workers in social agencies looking at the various issues which arise when they co-operate on television and radio programmes.

THE DIRECTORY OF SOCIAL ACTION PROGRAMMES is published twice a year and gives details of programmes in this area of broadcasting whether local, regional or national.

MEDIA PROJECT CASE STUDIES are published from time to time. Each case study looks at a specific project involving co-operation between broadcasters and voluntary/statutory agencies. Consideration is given to the various structures and relationships developed, as well as their overall success. Case studies are intended to provide the necessary information to help improve the development of similar projects.

MEDIA PROJECT INFORMATION PAPERS are published from time to time to provide information to broadcasters and voluntary/statutory agencies working in the area of social action broadcasting.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION £7.50 - which will entitle you to receive:

- A minimum of four editions of MEDIA PROJECT NEWS
- Two editions of THE DIRECTORY OF SOCIAL ACTION PROGRAMMES
- A minimum of four CASE STUDIES or INFORMATION PAPERS

Reduction of 15% for 12 or more subscriptions where all are to be sent to the same address.

To: THE MEDIA PROJECT, The Volunteer Centre, 29 Lower King's Road, Berkhamsted
Herts HP4 2AB

From: Name (to whom copies will be sent)
(PLEASE PRINT)

Position

Organisation (in full)

Address

.....

..... Tel:

I enclose cheque/postal order (MADE PAYABLE TO THE VOLUNTEER CENTRE) for £
(£7.50 annual subscription).

Signed Date